

VZCZCXRO1620
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHRB #0940 1511827
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311827Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6633
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3313
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 5719
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 4645
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 3089
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0703

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 000940

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2017

TAGS: [MO](#) [PBTS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON CONDITIONS IN WESTERN SAHARA

REF: A. RABAT 573

[1](#)B. RABAT 572

Classified by A/Polcouns Ian McCary for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: While recent weeks have seen many demonstrations of Sahrawis in Moroccan universities, unrest inside the territory remains limited. At least nine Sahrawi students have recently received jail terms for their role in demonstrations. In Sahara, Layoune reportedly remains quiet, with only isolated demonstrations, mostly by youth of high school age and below. The Wali (Governor) of the territory acknowledged to us that a number of people were detained by police but he maintained they were shortly afterwards identified and released. He contended that there have been no recent arrests for demonstrations. Local human rights contacts are making detailed allegations that at least some of those detained were beaten. On the week of May 20, a TDY Embassy officer witnessed a separatist demonstration of about 200, mainly youths, in the Saharan town of Smara. These demonstrations, which may have been in response to calls from the POLISARIO to mark their anniversary, appear to have been more restrained than those held in the same time frame in 2005-2006. The events illustrate that many Sahrawis remain pro-independence and see the POLISARIO as their representative. However, the absence of widespread response suggests that residents of the territory are at least looking at the prospect of negotiations to resolve the conflict. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In recent days there have been convictions of Sahrawi students for disrupting public order. On May 30, two separatist activists were sentenced in a court in Layoune to five years in prison and two others received a year and a half. Meanwhile, five Sahrawi students detained in Agadir, southern Morocco, during politically-charged campus violence in early May were sentenced on May 30 to two months imprisonment.

[1](#)3. (C) Rabat Army Attache, in Sahara to visit MINURSO during the week of May 20, chanced upon a demonstration of about 200 persons - mostly youths, just outside a small bidonville at the outskirts of town. There was some rock throwing. The number of police on the spot was limited, but ARMATT left the area before any denouement. The demonstrators may not have been Sahara natives, but may have been Sahrawi immigrants from Southern Morocco, who make up a substantial portion of Smara's population (reftels).

[1](#)4. (C) In a late May telephone conversation, the Wali

(Governor) of Layounne, the senior GOM official in the territory, assured Polcouns that there had been no arrests recently, although some persons had been briefly "detained and identified, then released." The limited demonstrations were carried out solely by young students, he observed. His technical staff questioned whether a recently released videoclip purporting to show demonstrators being violently dispersed by police during a May 20 demonstration, may not actually be footage from 2006. In any case this was being stimulated, publicized and magnified by the POLISARIO, the Wali maintained. Polcouns responded that the POLISARIO may have called for some action by its supporters, but stressed the necessity for security forces to exercise the utmost restraint, in order to enhance prospects for an agreed settlement.

Visit Embassy Rabat's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

RILEY